

THRILLS

Elt&Lennon&Bob
& David & Bette &

That enough to get you going?
Nope.—Well, how about Raquel
Welch? LISA ROBINSON reports
from the Big Apple.



RAY DAVIES does his REGINALD BOSANQUET. A scene from the New York production of "Preservation". See LISA ROBINSON'S report. Pic: BOB GRUEN.

"I HAD A great time," said Lennon, "but I wouldn't want to do it for a living." He laughed: "Actually it was fantastic... so emotional. Everyone was crying and everything."

John was talking from his table in the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Pierre, where a midnight supper dance was being held to celebrate Elton John's gig at Madison Square Gardens earlier that evening... the gig, of course, where Svelte Elton was joined onstage by one J. Lennon.

Lennon's unscheduled appearance had, it should be said, sent the audience completely berserk.

Together, they went through "Whatever Gets You Through The Night", "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds", and then (and no one was ready for this) "I Saw Her Standing There".

"That was really amazing," said Lennon. "I've never sung it before... Paul always did it." John continued to talk enthusiastically about the show, what an amazing performer Elton is, how he was carried back onstage for the encore by a huge black bodyguard... "So Las Vegas," we agreed.

John and Elton had planned the gig a few days before, and even had time for one rehearsal. As for the motive, Lennon's constant companion May Pang confided: "John told him he'd

go onstage with him if the song became No. 1." (Both "Whatever" and "Lucy" reached the top in the US). He never really thought it would happen. But when it did, he had to live up to his promise."

A LONG TIME ago (I won't mention how long), I had a date with a boy who used to call me up and whisper obscene things into the telephone. I thought this was incredibly sophisticated at the time, and when he suggested that we go see Bobby Short perform at the Living Room (then a smart Eastside supper club), I was impressed.

Bobby Short was, to my mind, the most elegant man I had ever seen, and I was immediately transported to a world where all the women wore furs and ate bon-bons and the men donned white satin mufflers and tuxedos as they sang Cole Porter songs to each other all night.

I was sadly brought down to earth when my date didn't have enough money to pay the bill and we slunk out in total disgrace. Even as we walked the 40 odd blocks back to my house, and I muttered all the way, I still couldn't stop thinking about Bobby Short.

And now — as I go back to hear him sing "These Foolish Things" at least once a month at the Cafe Carlyle in the super posh Carlyle Hotel where he performs three times nightly to packed audiences, he still is, I think, the most elegant man I've

ever seen.

I wonder if Bryan Ferry has ever seen Bobby Short; I think I'll get Atlantic's Earl MacGrath and Howard Stein (big Ferry fans) to take Bryan there when he's next in New York.

Bobby Short sings all those standards — "These Foolish Things", "Just One Of Those Things", "Miss Otis Regrets", "For All We Know", "Let's Fly Away", "How's Your Romance", "At Long Last Love", and so many more — songs of Porter, Gershwin, Noel Coward, Harold Arlen — for real, and has been doing so for years.

In a way it's fabulous that someone like Bryan Ferry has been able to bring some of these songs to the attention of younger audiences everywhere, and if it helps people to become aware of someone like Bobby Short — who wears a tuxedo every night as he holds court in the Cafe Carlyle — (he also gives annual concerts at Philharmonic Hall, occasionally with Mabel Mercer) — that's even better.

As people become increasingly desirous of going somewhere to sit with a drink in their hand while an artist performs, clubs like the Cafe Carlyle, Reno Sweeney's, and so forth, are enjoying tremendous success. (I don't know why Bryan objected to my suggestion that he should do a solo week at Reno Sweeney's...)

SPEAKING OF Reno's, Dana Gillespie opened there this week with much MainMan and RCA fanfare. It really was one of the most boring acts presented there in a while.

Dana Gillespie doesn't have a bad voice, and her songs are okay — even if they do sound pretty much the same. But her act — her stage, shall I say, presentation — is on this showing abominable.

The audience was constantly regaled with stories about how



ELT 'n' LENNON onstage at the Garden.

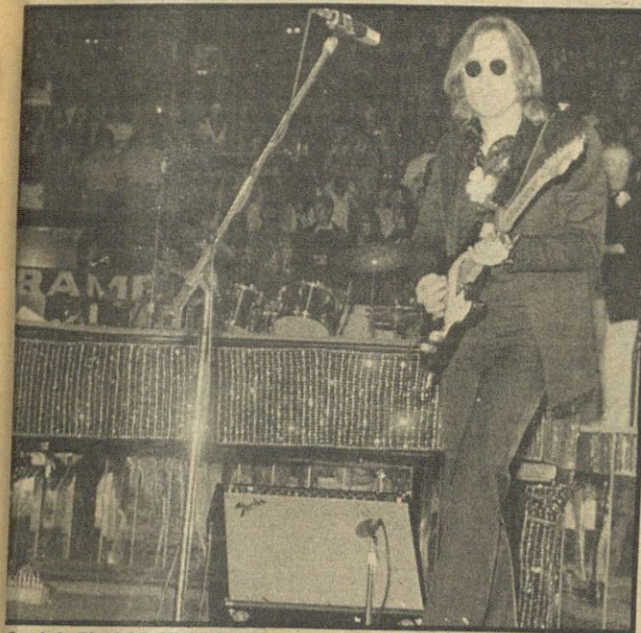
Americans didn't understand their blues roots, how we have different slang expressions than in England, how she wants to put the band members in bondage, how she gets lots of obscene phone calls. (Maybe it's the same guy who took me to Bobby Short...)

None of it made much sense, and while I assume it was an attempt to be raunchy, or sexy, or something it just came across as embarrassing and very dull.

She had the guitarist take her guitar pick out from inside her bra (ho-hum) and she wriggled her ass and she attempted to sit up on a stool as she coyly bared her rather hefty thighs to the audience.

What can I say? To paraphrase a line from a great motion picture, she's too big for those gestures.

Anyway, writer Fran Lebowitz echoed the feelings of many when she said, "Who



See left. Pic: BOB GRUEN.

would have ever thought that Wayne County would be the most tasteful act on Main-Man?"

In the audience to see Dana during the week were Raquel Welch, Bob Dylan (fresh from attending the "Sgt. Pepper" show), David Bowie and Bette Midler. Bette, Bob and Bowie all sat at the same table.

For those who care, Dylan's hair is longer and bushier than ever before, and he was wearing a leather cap, and some sort of wool jacket. Sunglasses, too.

Bowie was described as moving around strangely, looking very thin and a bit crazed. Bette is known to watch other female singers very carefully, but she needn't concern herself with this one.

Dylan, as mentioned had attended "Sgt. Pepper", and while he said that he liked the show, declined an invitation to go backstage and meet the cast.

The next night, "Sgt. Pepper" had John Kennedy Jr. in the audience, who arrived with several of his friends and a Secret Service man. John did want to go backstage and meet the cast, but got besieged by photographers who tried to get candid shots.

"WHAT A GREAT opening act," I said to Ray Davies backstage after the first half of the Kinks concert. "Yeah, they are a good group, aren't they?" he smiled.

The opening act for "Preservation" here was the Kinks, and the audience couldn't have been more ecstatic for the almost three hours that the band was onstage.

The first half of the show was the usual assortment of favourites; "Celuloid Heroes", "Lola" (that still brings the biggest cheers here), "Alcohol", "Skin & Bones", and then —

introduced by Ray this way: "We're going to do this song because we love it, we'll probably always do it. It was probably written before a lot of you were born..." — they ended up with "You Really Got Me."

Ray pranced and danced all around the stage as confetti, paper plates and the occasional spray of beer was tossed at him.

"Preservation" was performed with six singers, the Kinks, horn players, and used a large screen onto which films and slides were projected. The songs from both "Preservation" elpees were woven together with a plot that basically went like this: A small English village is threatened by a Mr. Flash who wants to buy up all the land, tear it down and build huge projects, skyscrapers and so forth. He represents Evil — his lifestyle is replete with women of a dubious nature and lots of booze.

Challenging him is Mr. Black — who wants to get together a people's army. They manage to take over, turn Mr. Flash into an artificial man, and Goodness (?) triumphs. I'm not sure of The Message, but, anyway, Ray played both Mr. Flash (onstage) and Mr. Black (on screen in interesting and well made films).

It's apparent that Ray Davies has had this concept in his head and on his albums for the past eight years; this is the first attempt on his part to actually turn it into a theatrical presentation, and it most definitely worked. Ray sensibly brought this to a rock and roll concert context rather than right away to a Broadway theater where it would have possibly been misunderstood.

The staging wasn't on a very grand scale; they used rear projection slides that included scenes of the English countryside and 1890's pornographic postcards, the singers wore two basic outfits ("Good" — while robes, "Bad" — flashy, glitter stuff and garter belts) as well as holding up cardboard cutouts in

front of them themselves as

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